
INTERNATIONAL BURSARIES FOR UK BLOGGERS

Application guidelines

The British Council is thrilled to offer a new opportunity for talented UK arts bloggers and writers to travel internationally.

Bloggers have had a huge influence on UK performance, but opportunities for paid work or career development are few and far between. To address this, we're piloting a programme awarding bursaries to three UK bloggers – enabling them to have an international experience, develop their skills and build connections outside the UK.

The winners will spend time in either Lagos, Romania or a country of their choice, meeting new contacts and discovering the richness of cultural exchange. This opportunity also includes two hours of mentoring with a member of our judging panel, led by Lyn Gardner. We ask winners to produce one or more pieces of work about performance inspired by their visit – to be published by the British Council, by themselves or by another publisher.

How to apply

- Please read these guidelines before applying.
- The application form is [available online](#).
- If you would prefer to complete the form as a Word document, email theatreanddance@britishcouncil.org

When is the deadline?

Thursday 28 November 2018 at 12:00 midday (GMT)

Contact details

If you can't find what you're looking for in this document, you're welcome to contact us. Please allow one week for us to reply to emails.

Email: theatreanddance@britishcouncil.org

Telephone: +44 (0)20 7389 4665

Who is eligible to apply?

We're looking for people who fit the following criteria:

- Lives in the UK.
- At least two years' experience of blogging, writing, vlogging or podcasting about arts. This includes experience of self-publishing, producing work for student publications and contributing to online platforms for emerging writers. Applicants don't necessarily need to have their own platform.
- Does not write regularly for a national publication.
- Has never had a single full-time job writing about performing arts.
- Helps the British Council achieve our aim to give a platform to voices from groups under-represented in UK arts and media.

What do the bursaries cover?

We expect each visit to last three to six nights (including travel). We have a budget of up to a maximum £4,000 for each bursary. We expect this to cover costs such as:

- Honorarium to cover your time at £150 per day of travel
- Travel
- Visa costs
- Accommodation
- Translation
- Travel insurance
- Innoculations not available on the NHS
- Perdiems at the British Council standard rate for each country
- Tickets for performances or fees for conferences/training courses

Extra accessibility costs are available for d/Deaf or disabled applicants.

We will also offer each winner two hours of individual mentorship with one of our judges – whoever they choose. This can be done in person or remotely. We do not have a travel budget for mentoring.

Who are the judges?

- Lyn Gardner, Associate Editor at *The Stage* and writer, Stagedoor app – Lead Judge
- Thom Dibdin, *The Stage*, alledinburghtheatre.com
- Cathy Gomez, Programme and Marketing Manager, Theatre and Dance, British Council
- Colin Hambrook, Editor, *Disability Arts Online*
- Sophia Jackson, Founder and Editor, *Afridiziak Theatre News*
- Arusa Qureshi, Editor, *The List*
- Gary Raymond, Editor, *Wales Arts Review*
- Sanjoy Roy, freelance critic
- Alice Saville, Editor, *Exeunt*

How will my work be published?

We ask you to produce one or more pieces of content about theatre, dance or performance as a result of your visit.

It could be published:

- By you if you have your own platform
- By the British Council
 - Our Theatre and Dance website (www.britishcouncil.org/theatreanddance) is our main platform for theatre and dance content. We publish news, features and advice for the industry. Our blog explores important issues and debates in contemporary performance. Our style is journalistic rather than academic. We share information about the UK scene with international readers, and help UK readers understand the international scene. Our audience is the international performing arts industry – from students to artistic directors.
 - Overseas British Council websites sometimes publish arts content, usually for wider audiences.
 - Our Voices blog (<https://www.britishcouncil.org/voices-magazine>) publishes content about arts, education, culture, science, global development and international exchange intended for a wide international audience.

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- Or you could pitch to another publisher
 - You could use the application form to pitch to publications edited by our judges. Winners can also use their mentoring sessions for advice on pitching to third parties – or you can use your own experience and initiative.
 - The British Council press team in the country you're visiting may be able to advise on opportunities to pitch content to local publishers.

Judging criteria

The panel will use the following criteria to judge applications:

- Quality of previous work
- Is the plan realistic and will it help the applicant's career development?
- Are the applicant's ideas interesting? Will they bring valuable learning to the arts sector?
- Will the content ideas appeal to either the arts industry or to wider audiences?
- Will this give a platform to voices under-represented in UK arts and media?
- Will the applicant share their experience widely?

Health tips

We can't offer specific medical advice but we do recommend travellers always seek their GP's advice before travelling overseas.

Bursary pathway

Please read the information below about the three bursaries available. You may apply for one of the bursary pathways.

1. Discover a project

Visit Lagos during the Lagos Theatre Festival. We'll arrange meetings with the performing arts community to fit your interests. The festival programme will be confirmed closer to the time but see the Lagos section below for some background on the festival.

Dates: LTF takes place from 25 February to 3 March 2019.

Lots of support: The British Council will give the winner lots of support to organise this visit and someone will accompany you throughout the visit. We'll arrange a phone call with a Nigeria colleague before you travel.

2. Explore a country

Travel independently to Romania to explore the performing arts scene based on your own interests. We expect you to do some preliminary research before you apply. See the Romania section below for an introduction to the Romanian scene.

Dates: The visit should take place in spring 2019.

Some support: The British Council will advise the winner on local intelligence and useful contacts, enabling you to create an itinerary and budget. We'll arrange a phone call with a Romania colleague before you travel. It might be possible to arrange a meeting with one of our arts staff during your visit. We'll provide you with an emergency contact.

3. Follow your idea

Propose your own journey, travelling overseas to pursue your interests in performing arts and to develop your knowledge, skills and networks. You are responsible for designing your own itinerary and budget, although the British Council will offer the winner some extra advice. The country you travel to should have a British Council office – [see this list](#) of over 100 countries that we work in.

This is so that we can add value to your experience and provide you with an emergency contact. You should also avoid going to a country that the [Foreign and Commonwealth Office](#) advises against travelling to. Please check with us before applying if you're not sure.

Dates: Your visit should take place before the end of March 2019.

Light-touch advice: The British Council will advise the winner on local intelligence and useful contacts, enabling you to finalise your itinerary and budget. We might be able to arrange a phone call with a colleague in the country you're visiting before you travel. It might be possible to arrange a meeting with one of our local staff during your visit. We'll provide you with an emergency contact.

Discover a project – Lagos

About Lagos Theatre Festival

by Fusi Olateru-Olagbegi, Project Manager – Arts, British Council Nigeria

For this bursary, we're offering a visit to Lagos during the Lagos Theatre Festival. We'll set up meetings based on your interests and we'll help to research performances. We'll provide someone either from the British Council or from the Nigerian arts scene to accompany you throughout the visit.

Lagos Theatre Festival (LTF) has grown to become the largest performing arts festivals in Nigeria and West Africa. It has been listed as one of [the top 20 theatre festivals around the world](#) by American Express Essentials.

The festival was conceived with the intent to present innovative interpretations of new ideas that will inspire and challenge audiences, and new works that spark conversations and debates. It promotes the presentation of theatre in unconventional spaces and encourages theatremakers and producers to expand their practice beyond traditional theatre spaces by creating ambitious and daring works that can be situated in any given space.

LTF was founded by the British Council in 2013 as part of its ambitions of fostering exchange and collaboration between Nigerian and British artists through the presentation of high quality theatre projects. It is now run as an independent foundation.

The festival was first held in 2013, and featured four shows over one weekend at Eko Hotel. In 2014, the festival moved to Freedom Park, featuring four shows in four days.

Following a break in 2015, the 2016 edition featured 109 shows over six days in 19 venues working with 35 theatre companies. LTF 2017 featured 86 events in six days at 16 venues with 40 production companies, including three from South Africa, one from the US and one from the UK. In 2018, over 47 productions showcased 110 shows at 21 venues in six days with two shows from the UK and one from Ghana.

The festival's Artistic Director is appointed by the festival board on a rotation system. This ensures the leadership opportunity is shared by different Nigerian practitioners. The new Festival Director for 2019 is Sola Oyebo. He produced [Saro The Musical](#), which toured the UK with Black Theatre Live, as well as [Fela and the Kalakuta Queens](#).

The sixth edition will take place from 25 February to 3 March 2019 and will feature over 120 events from Nigeria, UK, USA and other African countries. The theme for the year is 'Imagine the unimaginable'.

The LTF programme is usually finalised and announced in February.

[danceGATHERING](#), an annual dance lab and interdisciplinary festival, takes place just before LTF on 11 to 24 February 2019. This year's theme is AFROSPACETIME.

There isn't a disability arts scene as such in Lagos. However, there are some individual disabled artists. The British Council worked with some of them on [DISFIX](#), a project with Candoco, a few years ago.

There aren't many online resources for performing arts in Lagos, but we've picked out some links below. We recommend you look online for information on past editions of LTF, or use your own initiative, to find out more.

Find out more

- [See LTF 2018 festival highlights](#) on the British Council Nigeria website
- [Read a feature on female solo shows](#) at LTF 2018 from British Council Theatre and Dance
- [Follow LTF](#) on Facebook
- [See current arts projects](#) from British Council Nigeria
- [Read an overview of contemporary theatre](#) in Lagos and further afield in *The Africa Report*
- [Read about the growth of residencies](#) and exchanges in Lagos's visual arts in C&

Language

Performances at LTF are mostly in English. Some might be in Pidgin (no translator needed) or in another Nigerian language.

Information for d/Deaf and disabled applicants

The disability infrastructure is very under developed in Lagos.

We will provide a driver and a local guide to accompany all visitors, whether they're disabled or not.

The venues for LTF have not yet been confirmed by the festival. In the past, Freedom Park has been used as one venue for outdoor performances and as a festival hub, and it is accessible. Like many fringe festivals, LTF often includes venues that are not so accessible. In previous years, three performance spaces have been in spaces reached only by a staircase, but other venues have been accessible.

Performances do not usually have sign language interpretation or audio description.

Nigerian Sign Language is the national sign language. There are also local sign languages such as Yoruba.

We can advise further depending on your individual interests and access requirements.

Security

See the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice below. Remember that our staff in Lagos will help to make your visit as safe as possible and that there are rarely any problems on British Council supported visits.

We will provide a driver and a local guide for all visitors.

We can put the winner in contact with others who have previously visited Lagos with us.

Information on travelling in Lagos

[UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office](#)

Explore a country – Romania

Introduction to theatre and dance in Romania

by Cristiana Tautu, Head of Arts, British Council Romania

Although Romania's economy is the fastest growing in the EU (7.0%), investment in culture is the lowest in EU (0.4% of the general government expenditure in 2015, according to Eurostat). Nevertheless, the Romanian artistic and cultural environment is vibrant and growing, with international recognition in film and an active theatre and performance scene.

Funding is mainly dependent on public sources from national or regional governments, with a slight rise in city municipalities' investment in the cultural field. [Timișoara has just been announced](#) as a European Capital of Culture in 2021.

Most artistic and creative activity gravitates around Bucharest and a few bigger cities. There is an obvious need for capacity building on a country scale. Lack of funding generates a divide between the public sector and the independent one, thus the independent sector needs to be creative and resourceful when it comes to attracting audiences and funding.

There have been one-off projects in disability arts, and the commercial [NO LIMIT dance company](#) has raised the profile of young disabled people, but this hasn't yet translated into wider policy.

The theatre scene is the biggest out of the performing arts, mainly because many theatres have been regularly funded by the ministry of culture or municipalities, but also because the artform is highly regarded and appeals to a more conservative public.

The big players on the theatre scene have a history of great directors working with large ensembles. [Sibiu Theatre Festival](#) is internationally renowned and one of the biggest festivals in Europe, The [National Theatre](#) (which also runs a festival), [National Theatre of Cluj-Napoca](#) and [International Shakespeare Festival Craiova](#).

Independent companies, like [Replika Educational Theatre](#) (working with teenagers and tackling social subjects), [Political Theatre Platform](#) or [Reactor](#), are more community focused and inclusive, but they struggle to secure funds.

Dance and performance sectors are less developed, but nevertheless vibrant. The "school" of [CNDB](#) (The National Dance Centre Bucharest), a state institution, has opened up to performers and created a community of conceptual choreographers and performers.

Interesting artists on the scene include [Alexandra Pirici](#), who has been getting quite some public attention lately, and [Manuel Pelmus](#). Performance makers show increasing interest in gender, orientation and identity, with recent dance performances in Bucharest exploring LGBTQ issues.

The [Museum of Contemporary Art](#) started a performing arts programme last year, curated by [Ioana Paun](#), an active and activist theatre director. This programme has given audiences the chance to see performances from independent companies that do not have a space and has also offered a space for experiment.

April and May are the most active months of the year for performing arts.

For more discussion about the Romanian contemporary theatre scene see [Scene.ro](#), a publication edited by critic and curator [Cristina Modreanu](#), who also runs a festival in Bucharest.

Find out more

- [Check out current events](#) from British Council Romania
- [See the British Season programme](#) at Sibiu International Theatre Festival 2018 on British Council Romania's blog
- [Read a feature on political Romanian playwrights](#) at Sibiu in 2014 from The Guardian
- [Read about the search for identity](#) in contemporary Romanian theatre in The Theatre Times
- [See an argument for creating an actors' union](#) in Romania on IETM's website
- [Browse a directory of contemporary choreographers](#) in Romania

Language

You can get around Romania with a phrase book or language app. Lots of people in the performing arts industry speak English, though occasionally you might need a translator. Performances will mostly be in Romanian, but sometimes they're subtitled in English.

Information for d/Deaf and disabled applicants

The disability infrastructure is under developed in Romania and some visitors prefer bringing somebody to accompany them. If you're a wheelchair user, we recommend hiring a driver to get around – we can assist with this.

The bigger institutions are more likely to be physically accessible. Some smaller dance venues in Bucharest are also accessible.

See also: <https://wheelchairtravel.org/bucharest/>

Romanian Sign Language is the official sign language.

Performances do not usually have sign language interpretation or audio description, although sometimes they are subtitled in English.

We can advise further depending on your individual interests and access requirements. Email theatreanddance@britishcouncil.org if you have any questions.

Information on travelling in Romania

[UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office](#)

[Romanian Tourism](#)